

CLEVELAND CHESS ASSOCIATION

Draft Minutes of Annual General Meeting:

Held at the Great Ayton Working Men's Club, Whinstone View, Great Ayton TS9 6AT
at 7.15 p.m. on 5th July 2011.

Present:

(Middlesbrough) R Stather, P Mitcheson, S Cole, R Pallister, J Pallister, I Elcoate, G Murphy; (Guisborough) S Henderson; (Great Ayton) M McLoughlin, G Dickinson, P Ridsdale, P Archer, I Richardson; (The Griffin) B Whitaker, J Heely; (Teesside Hungarians) D Richardson; (Redcar) D Edmunds, D Baillie, A Lau, B Robson, D Cox; (Darlington) W Metcalfe, A Cinnamon; (Peterlee) D Armbruster, C Smith, C Walton, S Carter. (Apologies: P Semp, A Stockley).

R Stather welcomed the attendees and declared the general meeting to be open. He announced that a variation of the order of business set out on the Agenda as a result of certain matters needing to be dealt with before others for technical reasons.

1. MEMBERS' PROPOSALS (1)

6.1 **P Mitcheson:** (Constitution 8.1) Varied to provide that the Association's year-end be 31st July and that the present AGM be declared valid.

P Mitcheson advised that the present general meeting of the members needed to be declared as the AGM for 2011 to deal with the appointment of Officers etc. The Constitution prescribed that the AGM be held before the 1st July. The last season had run a few weeks beyond that of previous years. It was unclear why such a narrow window following the end of the playing season had been set originally. **Passed**

2. RATIFICATION OF CHAIRMAN CO-OPTED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The members were invited to ratify R Stather's co-option as Chairman of the Association by the Executive Committee in November 2010. This was **approved** unanimously. The Chairman stated that he would be applying a time limit to the discussion of items on the Agenda to ensure the meeting finished at about 10 p.m.

3. MEMBERS' PROPOSALS (2)

6.3 **R Stather:** (Constitution: 5.1a et al) That the post of President should be removed.

R Stather proposed that the post of President was unnecessary and there was a potential for conflict with the role of Chairman. Last year's events had been an example of this. P Mitcheson indicated that the role of Chairman was expressed to be the principal office and the President was not supposed to involve himself in the ordinary running of the Association, he was only a figurehead. The important constitutional role for the President was to assume the office of Chairman if that office became vacant unexpectedly. This had worked well in 2010 when the previous Chairman had resigned his office. The President would be an

experienced and elected member to fill the Chairman's role immediately. P Mitcheson considered the Chairman was too important a position to be left to co-option by the Executive Committee. There would inevitably be considerable delay whilst someone, hopefully, be found and a general meeting held for ratification. This was avoidable. R Stather indicated that one of his other proposals was that there be a Vice-Chairman instead and he would automatically become Chairman if the incumbent resigned etc. P Mitcheson said that as long as someone was in reserve, it did not matter what he was called. Many members expressed opinions with the result that the Chairman called an end to the debate, which was considerably over-running, and the matter was **adjourned**.

6.4 R Stather: (Constitution: 7.3) Add a restriction to the effect that the Chairman shall hold office for no more than two consecutive years.

R Stather explained that this was to prevent the leading office being dominated by a particular individual. There was a natural reluctance amongst other members to stand against a sitting Officer. A change in personality would be good for the Association. In response to a question from the floor, it was clarified that election at two successive AGMs was proposed and that any prior period of co-option as Chairman, ratified or not, would not be taken into account.

P Mitcheson wholly concurred in theory, but considered that the Association could easily find itself rudderless. Volunteers for any office had historically been difficult to find: that of Chairman would surely be the hardest. Why rule out a good Chairman? P Ridsdale said he shared this general opinion.

S Henderson expressed the view that in the event of no new Chairman being found that the Constitution –could be changed to allow the retiring Chairman to stand again. P Mitcheson did not think this was the right approach.

W Metcalfe postulated that the right to nominate a Chairman could pass from each club in turn, i.e. similar to the President of the NCCU passing between the constituent counties in succession. He indicated that this scenario had just arisen: another county had declined to appoint a new President of the NCCU from amongst its members and the right passed to Cleveland. If no one else wished to put themselves forward, W Metcalfe said he would consider the matter: no one did.

P Mitcheson considered that, in all probability, clubs would find no one willing to step forward and then what? An open election was an important principle that ought not to be discarded.

There was much discussion and the consensus was that the prevention of a 'dynasty' was the more important consideration. The Association needed volunteers to function and the automatic retirement of the Chairman was the best that could be achieved to bring other members forward. **Passed**

6.5 R Stather: (Constitution: 5.1) That the post of Vice-Chairman be created, whose duties are to assume the role of Chairman automatically on his retirement or cessation of office etc, but not have a vote on the Executive Committee in the meanwhile.

R Stather explained that he was aware that this method was used in other clubs, such as bowling, to ensure continuity. P Mitcheson queried whether any member of the Association could realistically predict his availability to fill a role in two years time? R Pallister asked why a Vice-Chairman would have no vote on the Executive Committee. D Armbruster enquired whether a Vice-Chairman was open to election after a year? Given that the question of a continuance of the President's position was adjourned, it was clear that much more thought was needed. Accordingly, the matter was **adjourned**.

4 MINUTES OF AGM HELD ON 2/6/10 AND EGM HELD ON 1/9/10.

P Mitcheson informed the meeting that drafts of these minutes had been published on the website for over six months. They were **accepted**.

5 PRIZE-GIVING

Prizes were awarded to the following: -

A Division champions: Peterlee A

B Division champions: Redcar A

C Division champions: Teesside Hungarians

Tom Wise K/O Cup winners: Middlesbrough Bishops

Jeremy Burnett Plate winners: Middlesbrough Rooks

Individual open champion: C Walton

Individual minor champion: P Ridsdale

6 OFFICERS' REPORTS

The Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and Match Organiser read their respective reports.

7 ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND NON-EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:

The incumbents were elected unopposed and en bloc as follows:

- a. Chairman—R Stather
- b. Treasurer—P Ridsdale
- c. Secretary—P Mitcheson
- d. President---vacant
- e. Match Organiser---S Cole
- f. Webmaster—vacant (S Henderson kindly offered to continue to provide the Executive Committee with technical assistance in managing the website)
- g. Grader---vacant
- h. E.C.F. delegate---G Walsh (who, although not present, had previously advised the Chairman that he would be prepared to continue in post if unopposed)
- i. NCCU delegate(s)---W Metcalfe

8 MEMBERS' PROPOSALS (3)

The Constitution

6.1 **See above.**

6.2 **B Whitaker:** (Definition of Association in 2.1) As the county of Cleveland was formally abolished in 1996, the name of the Association be changed to reflect this.

Members thought that this was worthy of consideration. However, if a change were to be agreed in principle, there needed to be specific choices. Accordingly, this matter was **adjourned**. Members are to be invited by notice on the website to put forward any suggestions for re-naming the Association. To allow full consideration to be given to them, they are to be sent to the Secretary by 31st December 2011 for publication on the website well in advance of next year's AGM. .

6.3 **See above.**

6.4 **See above.**

6.5 **See above.**

6.6 **S.Cole:** (7.7f) That the estimation of grades by the Grader be reviewed.

The view was expressed that M Creaney, last year's Grader, was unhappy with the five-game and then ten-game review method for estimating grades. S Henderson, who had proposed a change to the original provision, explained that the actual wording decided upon at the 2010 AGM had gone further than he had expected. It was thought that M Creaney might be willing to continue if the variation was reversed. Accordingly, P Mitcheson proposed that the wording employed in clause 7.7f prior to the AGM in 2010 be re-instated. It was **passed**.

6.7 **P Mitcheson:** (5.2 d and 7.1) That the post of Junior Organiser is abolished and that the legal responsibilities regarding juniors be declared to lie with the Clubs of which they are members.

P Mitcheson stated that the position of Junior Organiser was redundant. He could not remember when it was last filled. There were very few junior players these days and this situation was unlikely to change. Responsibility for looking after juniors lay at Club level. **Passed.**

6.8 **The Executive Committee:** (6.5, 6.7) That the formalities of calling a meeting of the Executive Committee etc. be removed.

P Mitcheson spoke for all the members of the Executive Committee. The stipulated procedure for giving notice to members, allowing them to attend etc was far too cumbersome and time-consuming. It did not meet practical realities since one-off decisions often needed to be made quickly. **Passed.**

League Rules

6.9 **S Henderson:** (7.4.4 et al) That the Association consider the intention of the E.C.F. to publish grading lists in January and July in each year and decide on the extent to which each should be employed within the Rules.

The meeting considered that whether or not to use the six-monthly grading lists should be left to the Grader, when appointed.

6.10 **S Cole:** That 5.13 be amended to refer to clauses 5.2 and 5.3 and provide that a deficiency in the number of teams in either the A or B Divisions be determined in the manner stipulated.

S Cole informed the meeting that as Match Organiser he had found that the absence of a clear mechanism for determining which teams in the B Division would stay up or be relegated when teams folded had been unhelpful last year. After discussion, it was considered that this issue should be left to the Match Organiser as per the Rules. **Not passed.**

6.11 **R Pallister:** A) Delete all rules relating to nominated players OR, in the alternative, B) Delete all rules relating to nominated players and replace with 'any player who has played 6 games in a higher division that season cannot play in a lower division from 1st March.

R Pallister considered that the subject of nominated players was always coming up for debate at general meetings. To avoid this contention, it was best to discard the concept. P Mitcheson explained that the nomination rules were designed to achieve fairer competition. Such rules had been employed for many years, particularly to prevent clubs with several teams using their stronger players to bolster the performance of their weaker teams playing in lower Divisions from time to time. He quoted, by way of example, Middlesbrough's 'A' Division players suddenly turning out for the Middlesbrough Knights for a crucial match. R Pallister conceded this possibility and that was why he put forward his alternative proposal. It was pointed out that by 1st March in a season a team could have accumulated enough league points with the assistance of 'guest' appearances. The proposal was **withdrawn**.

6.12 P Ridsdale: That a proviso be added to 7.4.3 to the effect that a Club fielding more than one team in a Division may nominate five as opposed to four of its strongest players to any particular team, the overall total of nominations per Division being a multiple of four.

It had been apparent for some time that clubs, such as Middlesbrough, with two teams in a Division were at a disadvantage. If desired, that club's five strongest players could not play for one team; one of them would have to be nominated to play for the other team. This was unfair. **Passed**

6.13 J Pallister: That a rule be added to provide a) that where a nominated player list contains a player that has not yet played at least one game by 01 January then the player concerned will be removed from the list and substituted with the highest rated player who has already played for the club in the current season and who was not previously nominated and b) that the withdrawn player remains eligible to play but not for any teams lower than the team for which they were originally nominated.

J Pallister explained that he considered there was a clear potential for abuse of the nomination rule by Clubs. What was the point of having a nominated player for a team if he did not actually play for it? Clubs could manipulate the system at present by nominating inactive players, so freeing-up active players to play in lower divisions. This was not fair. P Mitcheson queried the words, "...and who was not previously nominated." Did he mean the next highest graded active player who had not been previously nominated by his Club for any of its other teams that season? What if he had played for a team in the same Division? J Pallister clarified that he meant, "the next highest graded eligible player whether nominated or not for any another team in a lower Division by his Club". The matter proceeded on this understanding. There was some debate over whether, in practical terms, one game played by 1st January was enough to make a change worthwhile. The consensus was that the main aim was to establish the principle. **Passed**.

6.14 J Pallister: That 8.8.1 be amended so that the revised control is 30 moves in 1 hour 15 minutes.

J Pallister thought that the current rate of play for Elmwood's home games must be an oversight. It was acknowledged that the games needed to be shorter than normal, but this did not mean an accelerated rate of play before the time control was appropriate. No contrary opinion was expressed in the meeting. **Passed**.

6.15 J Pallister: That 5.6.3 be amended to introduce a further mode of separation, i.e. the game score against each other.

P Mitcheson advised that members had considered this idea when the current Rules were introduced. It had been then rejected in favour of a simple play-off under K/O Cup principles. J Pallister admitted that he had simply overlooked this and so **withdrew** his proposal.

6.16 D Edmunds: That a rule be added to clause 8 to provide for defaults prior to the commencement of a match to be taken on the lowest available board, unless the captains agree otherwise.

D Edmunds explained that his proposal followed the problem that had occurred in a match between Redcar A and Redcar B last season. The team captains had agreed a particular default in order that a player who had travelled a considerable distance had a game. There had been a successful appeal after the Match Organiser had imposed a penalty. He felt that some flexibility was appropriate in the interests of amenable chess. R Stather explained that the Match Organiser, who had consulted the Executive Committee and received unanimous support, considered that there had been a breach of the Rules. There was no suggestion that the motive was other than honourable, but the fact remained that any scoring prospects for Redcar B in that match had been enhanced with its board 1 playing down. D Edmunds said he had evaluated the statistical importance in overall league results of the action that had been taken and it was very small. He added that there could be good reasons in a social context and his proposal would maintain a degree of flexibility that was appropriate. Of course, team captains had to agree on the desired defaulted game. If they did not agree, then it would be taken on the lowest board. **Passed.**

6.17 D Edmunds: Games will commence when both players are present. The clock of absent black players may be started without white playing a move. On appearance, the black player will commence the game by starting white's clock.

D Edmunds explained that he would play certain moves, and not others, as white against particular players. The right to substitute a player under the Rules, he considered, put him at a disadvantage. A white player should only be required to play his first move when his opponent sat down at the board. This proposal met with wide approval. R Stather pointed out that if digital clocks were in use there would be a problem. This situation needed to be covered. P Mitcheson said this issue could be dealt with in a rule change. He wondered if certain of FIDE's Laws of Chess might be breached, perhaps clause 6? **Passed.**

6.18 W Metcalfe: That 7.4.10 be deleted.

W Metcalfe explained that he wanted to make the increasingly difficult job of team captain easier. There was no support for the idea that a player should be allowed to play for more than one team in the same Division in the same season. For example, the same five players in a Club could rotate between two teams in the same Division. Such a change would turn the usual concept of a team competition on its head. As there was evidently no support for the proposal it was **withdrawn.**

6.19 P Ridsdale: That 6.1 be amended to the effect that all matches shall be played as per the fixture list unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g. bad weather), with the prior agreement of the Match Organiser, provided that any team captain may elect on one occasion per season to postpone a match on at least 7 days notice to his opposing team captain. The match to be played in accordance with the existing 6-week window etc.

P Ridsdale said that he raised this point to prevent some captains abusing the present system to secure tactical deferments of matches either because of player unavailability or to gain an advantage over rivals. He knew most captains fulfilled fixtures even when they were below strength. The meeting generally considered the aim of such a change was self-evidently sound; there would be practical problems. It would put the Match Organiser continually on the spot. Keeping track of who had used their permitted postponement and, who had not, would be an additional burden. Whilst there probably had been some 'gamesmanship' in the past, this was perceived to be infrequent. It was acknowledged that the situation ought to be monitored during the forthcoming season. If necessary the matter would be re-visited. Accordingly, the proposal was **withdrawn**.

K/O Cup Rules

6.20 **B Whitaker:** That 19.1 is deleted.

B Whitaker thought the rule unduly punished clubs that were struggling to field a full team. The consensus of the meeting, though, was that teams should continue to be penalised by defaulting games. **Not passed**.

6.21 **J Pallister:** That 19.2 be varied to provide for the tie-break to be determined by board count.

J Pallister accepted that his proposal had been considered several times before and rejected by members. It would not be raised again. However, he felt strongly that the outcome of a match was essentially being determined at the outset and not at the end. R Stather asked him to clarify what he meant by 'board-count'? He said, bottom board elimination. There followed a lively debate. The usual counter arguments were raised. What would happen if there were five draws? Why should a board five player in a team event have his win demeaned? **Not passed**.

Individual Championship

6.22 **P Ridsdale:** That the CCA pay the entry fee (£250+) to the British Championships 2012 of Colin Walton.

P Ridsdale explained that the British Championships 2012 would be held in North Shields. It was, in his opinion, important for the Association to be represented in its own region. The ECF had confirmed that its current champion, Colin Walton would qualify if the Association put him forward. Without Colin being obligated to participate, the meeting was asked to approve the payment of his entry fee if he chose to compete. **Passed**.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

P Mitcheson drew members' attention to the paper recently published by Andrew Farthing about funding the gap in the ECF's income in the light of the lost £60k government grant. He thought it was well-worth reading. Should there be a formal response from the Association to the suggested options? S Henderson considered that this was unnecessary. From what he had heard, there was significant opposition from southern counties and there was little likelihood of any of the proposals being passed. It was resolved that Association should simply wait and see what happened at the next meeting of the ECF. The meeting concluded.